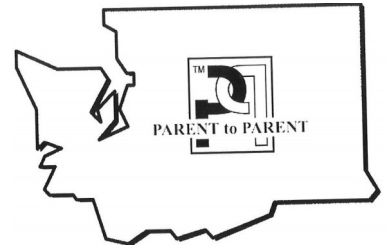


August 2021

Island County Parent to Parent Newsletter



Accessible Communities Committee of Island County

We Need You! Your Voice, Your Stories, Your Ideas

Seeking Self-Advocates, Family Members, Community Members & Providers

Who we are: A sub-committee operating under the Governor's Committee on Disabilities tasked with helping our communities be more welcoming and inclusive for persons with disabilities. We're seeking self-advocates, family members, providers and community members to join our committee.

Our mission: To identify barriers that people with disabilities, or at risk, experience while living or visiting Camano and Whidbey Islands. Funds are available upon approval of project through the Governor's Committee. We would love to hear your experiences and suggestions for future projects that would benefit our communities. See <https://accessiblecommunities.wa.gov/>

When we meet: 3rd Wednesday of the month via Zoom 1:00-2:00pm

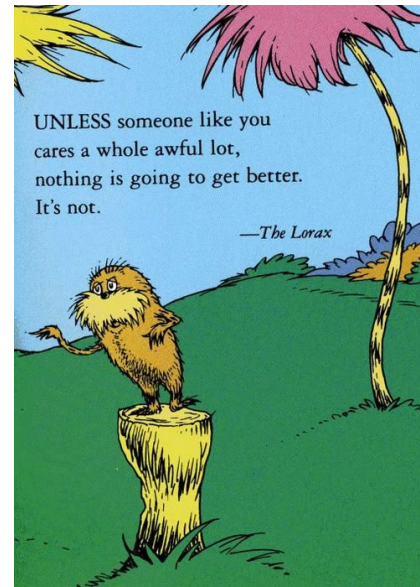


Contact: Tiffany Wheeler-Thompson,

t.wheeler-thompson@islandcountywa.gov
or call/text (360)632-7539.

Examples of projects approved and completed:

- ⇒ **Island Transit Bus Stop Seats**—making travel on the island more accessible to those that cannot stand for long periods of time or need a resting seat while waiting for their bus to arrive.
- ⇒ **Island County Behavioral Health Resource Guide**—A comprehensive list of resources for behavioral health services and support in Island County and beyond. The resource guide is on the Island County Behavioral Health Outreach website as well as the Island County Parent to Parent website. <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/Humanservices/Pages/Parent-to-Parent.aspx>
- ⇒ ****Newly approved** Langley Accessible Sidewalk at SeaWall Park.** This sidewalk will give people with mobility issues access to a lookout point near "Hope" the Wishing Whale.



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Want to know more about Parent to Parent? Check out our website and Facebook page.

<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/Humanservices/Pages/Parent-to-Parent.aspx>
Various Resource Guides

<https://www.facebook.com/islandcountyparent2parent>

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POWERFUL ways to manage back-to-school ANXIETY



PREPARE

- Establish And maintain a connection to school by attending fun events together.
- Initiate early discussions about the upcoming school year with books, like "Noni is Nervous" by Heather Hartt-Sussman and "Moe's First day of School" by Kate Berube
- Let them know it is normal to worry. Simply knowing to expect some jitters early on, and even hearing about yours, can be very reassuring.
- Help them build resilient mindsets. Tune into a few episodes of the "Big Life Kids" podcast together to learn more about facing challenges.



IDENTIFY SPECIFIC FEARS

- When delving into specific fears, be sure to phrase the question positively ("Do know who you might play with at recess?").
- Consider some of the most commonly reported school fears. Your child may worry about academics, social interactions, having the "right stuff" for school or separating from you.



FOCUS ON POSITIVES

- Encourage your child to write about their school fears.
- Start by grabbing a piece of construction paper, and label one side "Worry thoughts" and the other "Happy Thoughts" Draw a line down the center of the page. Then, have them either write or draw in each column.
- Have your child name all the fun things that can happen at school that can't happen anywhere else.
- Remind your child that all the thinking they'd done means they are ready for the year.



STAY CONNECTED

Consider adding one of the following acting to your morning routine to maintain the connection with your child all day and soothe worries:

- Draw reminders on hand (heart or a kiss)
- Give them a worry stone or bead to keep in their pocket
- Put your photo in their backpack..
- Place encouraging notes in their lunch box.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL STRESS



8 IN 10

parents experience **back-to-school anxiety** - with the majority saying there is no tougher time for a parent

Sometimes life can keep parents up but everyday life can become even more stressful during the back-to-school season. Between new routines, bake sales and carpools, parents have a lot on their minds...



47%

say the back-to-school season is **more stressful** than the holidays



3 IN 4



feel pressure from their partner to **stay on top of everything**

63%

feel back to school is the **most stressful time** of the year for them

TOP 5 BACK-TO-SCHOOL STRESSES

- Back-to-school shopping
- Getting adjusted to new schedules
- Early mornings
- Getting my children out of bed in the mornings
- Getting my children to school on time



SCHOOL SEASON

The average parent bakes **MORE THAN 89 CUPCAKES A YEAR**



7%

bake more than 250 per year - that's more than **3,000 cupcakes before graduation!**

...this equates to 540 across the whole school year* or a whopping 7,560 cups to see a child from pre-k to the end of high school

Parents drink **3 CUPS OF COFFEE** on a typical day during the school year...



*Based on the average number of school days per year, as reported by US Dept. of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ipeds/data/ipeds_tables/11.asp)

Preparing for Back-to-School Success

How to set kids up to thrive, despite the uncertainties

There's still a great deal of uncertainty surrounding school openings this fall. Remote learning, in-person classes, some of both? But even if you don't know quite what school will look like this year, there are still things you can do to set your child up to succeed.

Set Boundaries First, parents should be clear on what their role is. "Spring was a really quick pivot for parents, teachers and students," says [Laura Phillips](#), PsyD, a clinical neuropsychologist at the Child Mind Institute. "But teachers are now planning in a way they couldn't before, and parents should be assured that they don't have to be their child's teacher this fall."

Parents have enough on their plates and setting boundaries around [remote learning](#) will decrease stress and help ensure you have more bandwidth to support your child. "As a parent, your role is to assist your kids during remote learning by providing the right amount of support and structure, and to help them problem-solve," says Dr. Phillips. "It's not your job to teach your kids."

Communicate with teachers One way you can begin to establish a partnership is by reaching out to your child's teachers via email prior to the start of the school year to introduce yourself (and your child) and initiate a collaborative relationship.

"Some teachers will need to balance both live and remote teaching at the same time, and some will need to balance different groupings of kids, so approach them with an understanding that they will have a lot to manage," [Jodi Musoff, MA, MEd](#), an educational specialist at the Child Mind Institute, recommends. In that introductory email, include information about how your child handled distance learning this past spring and their academic strengths and weaknesses. You can also [take the opportunity to ask questions](#).

If there's anything going on at home that might affect your child's learning this fall — something that's certainly true of many kids these days! — now is a great chance to fill teachers in. "I really believe in more communication rather than less," says Faith Hunter, lower school principal at Little Red School House in New York. If you're stretched thin and juggling other responsibilities, if your child is having a hard time sharing a work space with siblings, if they're struggling socially — whatever it is, knowing the context will make it easier for teachers to be sensitive to your child's needs.

"Be patient and don't expect to receive a response immediately," advises [Kenya Hameed](#), PsyD, a clinical neuropsychologist at Child Mind Institute. "Teachers may not start looking at these emails until they're officially on the clock." But by reaching out to them now, you're getting a jump on the personal connection that will [help your child thrive](#) once fall arrives.

Get your child organized Keeping supplies and information organized is a common challenge for kids of any age, especially with the switch to remote learning. This is particularly important for [children who have ADHD](#), since their [executive](#)

[functioning challenges](#) may make it difficult to manage multiple teachers, programs and websites.

"Help create some scaffolding for your children before school begins by making a list of the different platforms they'll need

to check to learn about upcoming meetings and assignments," says Dr. Phillips. "When you don't see your teachers in person, it's easy to be unaware of what you have to do, so knowing where their assignments are posted will set them up for success."

These details might seem secondary to the things your child is learning in school, but they're actually a crucial foundation. "At a minimum, there are basic things that your child needs in order to show up and learn,"

says Dr. Hameed. She recommends helping kids get a strong start by setting up an environment that helps facilitate schoolwork and making sure they're comfortable using important tools (like tablets) before classes begin. Some examples of this could be:

- Working together to set up a quiet workspace and experimenting with what works best for your child — this could mean a separate room, designating a specific portion of a shared space, or a set of noise-cancelling headphones that makes it easier to focus. If your children are sharing a space, you can encourage them to personalize their area by decorating a presentation board or cardboard box to serve as a privacy screen.
- Designating spots to store writing utensils, paper, books, handouts and any other materials they need.
- Making sure you have a reliable internet connection.
- Checking to confirm that your child's tablet or laptop is working and that they know how to use it.
- Taking some time to explore any websites or programs the school is using together so that your child feels comfortable navigating the tech on their own.

Making a physical list of important passwords kids might need to remember and putting it in a safe, accessible place.

Settle into routines If your child is distance or hybrid learning, it's helpful if you can create a routine that's similar to what they would experience if they were attending school in person. "One of the most important things to ask teachers is for the flow of a typical day and the materials your child should have," says Hunter. "It'll allow you to really think about how you can encourage your child to gain the same independence that they would have in the classroom." For example, elementary school children may put their picture on an attendance chart when they arrive at school and then make sure their supplies are organized for the day. Next, there might be a morning meeting or a look ahead at the day's schedule. You won't be able to replicate these routines exactly, but talking to teachers can help you understand what kids would ordinarily expect, and brainstorm manageable ways to give them a similar sense of structure at home. This doesn't have to be elaborate — it might just be a few reliable steps that kids can count on to [make transitions easier](#).



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fortably through the day. Partnering with your child’s teachers to establish a similar framework at home means that, eventually, your child will be able to go through their day with less assistance from you. You’ll get some of your time back and they’ll gain more confidence — everyone benefits.



Ease anxiety about an unusual school year

Distance and hybrid learning models will make it much more difficult for your child to get to know their teachers and classmates this year. Think creatively about how you can help your child develop a connection with them, and don’t hesitate to ask the teacher what you both can do to build that bond.

For instance, children with [social anxiety](#) often visit their schools to meet their teachers and see their classrooms before the school year begins. Dr. Phillips suggests that parents consider asking if there are any similar opportunities for their children to see a real, live human prior to the first day of school, whether it’s over video chat or at a socially distant face-to-face meeting. Or, you could ask your child what they’d like their teacher to know about them and email it to the teacher, perhaps including some of their own questions for the teacher as well. Even just making introductory notes for your child to keep on hand can reduce anxiety around remote learning — that way, when it’s time for that icebreaker activity on the first day of class, they won’t have to think of what to say on the spot.

For children transitioning from elementary to middle school, moving to a larger campus and from one teacher to many (all with potentially different teaching styles and online systems) can be overwhelming under normal circumstances, so be sure to talk with your child ahead of time about what that might feel like.

The same goes for other big transitions, like moving up to high school or changing schools. “All transitions take a while to get used to, but they eventually even out,” says [Julia Nunan-Saah](#), PhD, a clinical neuropsychologist at Child Mind Institute. “Set expectations, and let kids know it may take a month to get used to this new system. Remind them of their coping strategies for when there are bumps in the road and assure them that you’ll be there to help them get through it.”

Schedule family time Separating school life and its stressors from family life will continue to be a challenge for those who are distance learning, but it’s important to create a distinction when you can.

If it’s manageable for your family, try to create a transitional period between schoolwork and home life to create a more positive atmosphere. Scheduling fun activities for evenings and weekends, like a game night or a hike, can also provide the relaxation and sense of connection that will help your child focus and learn during the school day.

Even just planning quick, regular check-ins with your child — over breakfast, for example — can make a big difference. That bit of planning gives your child confidence that you’re facing these new challenges together, and it provides a built-in time for them to come to you with any concerns as the school year goes on. Child Mind Institute

<https://www.pilotace.org/>

Have a Concern? Need a Screening? Need Resources? Need Support?

What is a Developmental Screenings? A screening tool identifies a child who is at risk for a diagnosis of autism. A positive screening does not mean your child is autistic.

What is the Evaluation Process? If the screening tool identifies an area of concern, a formal developmental evaluation may be needed



**** Website includes Parent to Parent Disability Resource Guide, Autism Resource Guide and Behavioral Health Resource Guide under resources. Parent to Parent is here for support and more.**

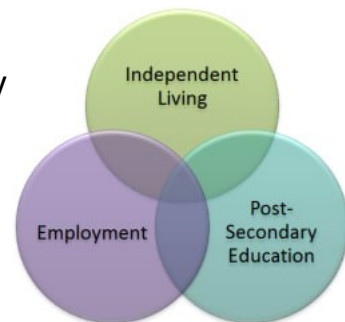


It is never too early to start planning for the future. More details to follow.

Did you miss the 2021 Spring Island County Transition and Resource Fair? Or want to watch it again? Great news, it was recorded. Lots of great topics for any age.

Recorded on Wednesday, April 14th <https://www.ohsd.net/Page/8746>

Virtually explore services in our community in the areas of Developmental Disabilities (DDA) eligibility, Social Security (SSI and SSDI), Advocacy, Guardianship options, Employment Services & Support, Special Needs Trusts and Savings Accounts, and more!



Executive Function: What Does Executive Function Disorder Look Like in Children?

Executive dysfunction can start as early as age 2. If your child has trouble getting started, can only remember two or three things at a time, struggles with problem solving, or feels overwhelmed at school, he or she might have an executive function deficit. Common signs and symptoms of EFD in children include:

- Forgetting tasks and homework
- Trouble starting homework independently
- Difficulty estimating how long a task will take
- Being distracted easily
- Difficulty keeping track of belongings
- Inability to remember names and other key details
- Trouble listening to and following instructions
- Moving on to another task before one is finished
- Difficulty remembering and following multi-step instructions
- Problems understanding roles in multi-part organizations, like sports teams
- Trouble transitioning between tasks



Awareness of these symptoms can help parents set up an early detection system so they can seek an evaluation and treatment before a child begins to struggle in school. Up to 90 percent of kids with ADHD also have [executive function challenges](#), many of which last into adulthood.

The seven executive functions ([self-awareness](#), [inhibition](#), [non-verbal working memory](#), [verbal working memory](#), [emotional self-regulation](#), [self-motivation](#), and [planning and problem solving](#)) develop consecutively over time. Self-awareness starts to develop around age 2; by age 30, planning and problem solving are fully developed in a neurotypical brain. However, individuals with ADHD generally lag 30 to 40 percent behind their peers in developing one executive function, and then the next. Executive dysfunction is often difficult to ignore during the transitions to 6th or 9th grade, when school structures and schedules change dramatically, and academic expectations increase. For more information and the rest of this article <https://www.additudemag.com/executive-function-disorder-in-children-symptoms/>

Coffee & Conversations

Casual **Virtual** gatherings offered Daytime - 11am-Noon and Nighttime on the **2nd Wednesday of the month**. 6:30-7:30pm. Call/text/email Tiffany with questions and to receive the Zoom link for the meetings.
t.wheeler-thompson@islandcountywa.gov

PAMI Padres Apoyando Motivando Informando

Grupo de apoyo en Español para familias de niños con necesidades especiales. **Primer Martes** de cada mes.
Laiza (787)529-6788

Whidbey Functioning Autism Social Group

We are an informal group that provides support, information and social fun for individuals on the Autism Spectrum. Contact Todd Brehmer fineart@whidbey.net

People First Adults with disabilities that want to meet others with disabilities, build friendships, and promote inclusion in their community. Contact Call/text for more info (360)720-4918.

Heritage Adventurers

A friendship group for 18 and over on Whidbey Island meets for outings and events Sue Andrew at (360)321-5748

Flying Fingers Deaf and Hard of Hearing Social. Contact Susan for more details. (360)221-0383

Island County Parent to Parent

Support & Resources for People with Disabilities in Island County

Tiffany Wheeler-Thompson, Coordinator
(360)632-7539 call/text

t.wheeler-
thompson@islandcountwa.gov



**Check our Facebook page for up-to-date resources, information and activities
www.facebook.com/islandcountyparent2parent

** We are now on Instagram too!

https://www.instagram.com/parent_2_parent_island/

We have resource guides on our website:

- *Island County Parent to Parent Disability Resource Guide
- *Parent to Parent Autism Resource Guide
- *Island County Behavioral Health Resource Guide.

<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/Humanservices/Pages/Parent-to-Parent.aspx>